

T H E

GRAND INQUIRY,

Am I in CHRIST or not?

EXPLAINED and RECOMMENDED,

In Order to help *any Man* to know
the STATE of his own SOUL.

With some PREFATORY HINTS, for pro-
moting a more general SPREAD of such
SELF-INQUIRY.

By BENJAMIN FAWCETT. *K*

*If thou take forth the Precious from the Vile, thou
shalt be as my Mouth. Jer. xv. 19.*

S A L O P :

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THE P R E F A C E.

TH O' the professed Followers of *Jesus* be ever so much divided, and subdivided, by Modes and Forms, by Notions and Speculations in Religion, it is nevertheless delightfull to contemplate their Union in their common *Christianity*. But when Charity has thus exerted all its healing Power and Influence, in Order to produce Harmony out of Confusion, and turn Deformity into Beauty; yet even *Charity* itself must submit to the evident Dictates of *Truth*, and still suffer one Distinction to remain. *For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel*: Neither are they all *Christians* in Reality, who wear that lovely Name. *Saints* and *Sinners* will distinguish the whole *Christian* World, till the Period of this State of Trial shall make a distant and everlasting Separation. Oh Eternity! Eternity! —

And are *Christians*, thro' every Age, to be thus distinguished from each other? Will there ever be in the Church upon Earth, both *almost*, and *altogether*, *Christians*? Will the *Form of Godliness* always differ from the *Power*; and they, who merely name the Name of *Christ*, from those who actually depart from all Iniquity? Will the

Time be never known, on this Side the *Judgment-Day*, when *Christianity* in Name, and in Truth, shall be inseparably united in every Professor? The Thought is very affecting! It should alarm us with a Sense of Danger. It should excite us to serious *Self-Inquiry*. Perhaps, we have, even this Moment, only a Name to live, while we are dead. And perhaps, after all the shining Honours of our *Christian* Profession, we shall at last appear among the many, who will say to Christ in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name have cast out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful Works? Unto whom he will then profess, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work Iniquity. For God's Sake, and in Pity to our own Souls, let us be persuaded to act the safe, the prudent Part, and examine ourselves, prove our own selves, and know our own selves, whether we be in Christ, or not.

Even supposing our State and Condition for Eternity to be good, Nothing is more desirable than to know that it is so. We cannot be happy at present, without knowing it. And our Happiness must bear a due Proportion to the rational and Scriptural Foundation on which our Knowledge of it is built. An imaginary Happiness may very soon prove real Misery. Therefore serious *Self-Inquiry* is, upon all Principles, worthy the Man and the Christian. Never does the Merchant reflect with so much Pleasure upon his secular Affairs, as when he has just finished an exact Balance of his Accounts, and found his Substance,

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Substance, in Fact, not diminished, but improved. Nor can the *Christian* ever take a more effectual Step, *that his Joy may be full*, than, with jealous Eye, to review what he has been doing in a divine Life, how he has negotiated his great Affairs for Eternity, and whether he finds in himself the genuine Characteristicks of *an Heir of God, and a Joint-Heir with Christ*.

Wherever Religion flourishes, *Self-Inquiry* is one principal Means of its Beginning and Progress. The Faith and Piety of the *Sailor* at *Philippi* began with earnestly asking, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* And when Thousands of guilty *Jews* at *Jerusalem* were, in one Day, brought to the Obedience of Faith, their divine Change first discovered itself by that inexpressible Concern of Mind with which they said, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* Were we to consult the uninspired History of the Church, thro' succeeding Ages, it would appear beyond all Contradiction, that, whenever religious *Self-Inquiry* was superseded by Negligence and Formality, or by the Animosities of Contention and Debate, real Religion proportionably suffered; but, when *Self-Inquiry* revived, real Religion always revived with it.

It will, I hope, be universally allowed, that *the Beauty of Holiness* is never so eminently seen in *the House of God*, as when its sacred Offices of publick Prayer, Preaching, and Administration of Sacraments, not only have, thro' the Skill and Faithfulness of *Ministers*, a natural Tendency to excite every *Worshipper* to serious *Self-Inquiry*;

but when, by a divine Blessing, they are made effectual to this important End. *To see such Glory* as this, is, in the Estimation of all pious *Ministers*, like *the Joy of Harvest*. And if, in this Respect, my reverend *Fathers* and *Brethren*, of *whatsoever Denomination*, have been signally owned and honoured of *God*, as I am verily persuaded some of them have, *I therein do rejoice, yea, and I will rejoice*. I desire, with all my Heart, more particularly to bless *God* for that Spirit of Piety and Zeal, which Numbers of the *Clergy* of the *established Church* are now exerting, in their respective *Parishes*, in Order to awaken the Souls around them out of a State of spiritual Security and Insensibility, and possess them with the most serious Attention to eternal Concerns. To hear that many of their *Parishioners* are *asking the Way* to the Heavenly Zion, *with their Faces thitherward*, is a convincing Evidence that *God* is graciously smiling on their faithfull Labours. And it happily intimates, that *our Candlestick* shall not yet *be removed out of its Place*; tho' on many other Accounts, there is so much Reason to fear it. Indeed, such *Labourers* as these are *the Chariots and Horsemen*, the Armies and Navies, of our *British Israel*.

This Revival of a Spirit of Piety and Zeal among *Ministers* will, I trust, do more, towards reviving *the Pastoral Inspection of all the Souls belonging to their respective Parishes or Congregations*, than any Thing that has been ever so earnestly, or judiciously wrote, in Favour of that too much neglected, but most important Part of the *sacred Office*.

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Office. The great *Apostle* could not have took such a chearfull Farewell of those, *among whom he had gone preaching the Kingdom of God*, and who, he certainly knew, *should see his Face no more*, if, in these tender Circumstances, he could not, with holy Confidence, have told them, *I have taught you publicly, and from House to House.* And was every *Minister* to go, as often as he can, at least *once a Year*, thro' the several *Families* belonging to his *Parish*, or *Congregation*, merely to inquire into, and assist them in, their spiritual Concerns; this, it is believed, would more generally spread religious *Self-Inquiry*, than the most regular Performance of all other *Ministerial Duties*, abstracted from it. Our *Addresses* from the *Pulpit* are like *Arrows shot at a Venture*; but in *Families* we directly level at the proper Mark. In going from *House to House*, we shall often make those Discoveries of the Success of our publick Labours, which might otherwise have never been known to us in the present World; and thus we shall seize the most desirable Opportunities for confirming many serious Impressions, or reviving them before they are quite dead. Thus we may demonstrate, how much we are in earnest for the Welfare of Souls, and be the happy Instruments of leading many to *Closet*, *Family*, and *publick Worship*, who have been living all their Lives *without God in the World*. It is, indeed, a Work of *Self-Denial*, and needs much Conquest over our corrupt Inclinations, but it is no more, than is necessary to prove our selves the faithfull Servants of *Jesus Christ*.

Christ. But whatever Reluctance we may feel at our Entrance on this great and good Work, we shall certainly find, that the prudent, faithful and vigorous Prosecution of it will leave a Joy behind it, infinitely more valuable than any Reflection upon the Hours spent in the most gay, or the most learned Entertainments. *Bishop Burnet*, in his *Discourse of the Pastoral Care*, represents this particular Branch of it, “as indeed, “the Foundation upon which all the other Parts “of the *Pastoral Care* may be well managed”. *Dr. John Edwards* begins his Book called *the Preacher* with “granting, that there are other “Parts of the *Pastoral Office*, and those of great “Importance, besides *Preaching*.—We must, “(says he,) enquire and endeavour to discover, “by private Conference, what is the particular “Condition of every Member of our Flock, “with Respect to Religion, and the Welfare “of their Souls. We are to advise, counsel, “and admonish them in their own *Habitations*, “as well as in the *Church*. We have our Blessed “Saviour for our Pattern in this Matter ; for we “read in the Evangelical Records, that, besides his publick Discourses and Sermons, he “made frequent Visits, and gave private Advice “and Counsel. And we read, that the Apostles *taught the People publickly, and from House “to House*. And our Church approves of this “in her *Form of the Ordination of Priests*, where “she requires of those that take that sacred “Office on them, and have the Charge of “Souls, *to use private (as well as publick) Ad-*
“*monitions*

monitions and Exhortations, as Need shall require, and Occasion shall be given". Dr. Leechman, in his *Sermon on the Temper, Character, and Duty of a Minister of the Gospel*, says, "the Employment of composing Differences, or extinguishing Animosities, searching out modest and indigent Merit and relieving it, comforting a melancholy Heart, giving Counsel to a perplexed Mind, suspending Pain by our Sympathy and Presence, tho' it were but for a Moment, suggesting to an unfurnished Mind proper Materials for Meditation in the Time of Distress, or laying hold of a favourable Opportunity of conveying valuable Instructions, and religious Impressions, to a Mind little susceptible of them on other Occasions; there is no Need of saying any Thing in Confirmation of this: It was the glorious Character of Jesus, that *he went about doing good*". Dr. Doddridge, in his *Sermon on the Evil and Danger of neglecting Souls*, observes, "the Learned, the Wise, the Virtuous, the Pious Minister, is, I fear, often negligent of a considerable Part of his Trust and Charge.—The diligent Inspection of our Flock, *Pastoral Visits*, the Observation of the religious State of Families, *personal Exhortations, Admonitions and Cautions*, by Word or Letter, as Prudence shall direct, the *Catechising Children*, the Promoting Religious Associations among the younger and the elder People of our Charge, and the strict and resolute Exercise of Discipline in the several Churches over which we preside; are these no Parts of our Office? Will

“ Will we say it with our dying Breath, will
 “ we maintain it before the Tribunal of *Christ*,
 “ that they did not belong to the *Christian Mi-*
 “ *nistry*? And if not, will our Care in *other*
 “ *Parts* of it be allowed as a sufficient *Excuse* be-
 “ fore him, for our total *Omission* of *these*? Mr.
Baxter, in his *Gildas Salvianus*, or the *Reformed*
Pastor, says, “ one Word of seasonable Advice
 “ given by a *Minister* to Persons in Necessity,
 “ has done that Good which many *Sermons*
 “ would not have done — When I look before
 “ me, and consider what, thro’ the Blessing of
 “ *God*, this Work well-managed is like to pro-
 “ duce, it makes my Heart leap for Joy. Truly
 “ Brethren, [and *God* grant this may be more
 abundantly applicable to all the reverend *Breth-*
ren in the present Day, than it ever was in
 1655!] you have begun a most blessed Work,
 “ such as your own *Consciences* may rejoice in,
 “ and your *Parishes* rejoice in, and the *Nation*
 “ rejoice in, and the Child that is yet unborn;
 “ yea, Thousands and Millions, for ought we
 “ know, may have Cause to bless *God* for, when
 “ we have finished our Course”.

But we are not to imagine, that the promo-
 ting religious *Self-Inquiry* in precious immortal
 Souls is to be absolutely confined to the *Sacred*
Office of the *Christian Ministry*. Every *Rank*,
 and *Relation* of Human Life may contribute
 something, that is valuable, towards the benevo-
 lent and most important Design. *What knowest*
thou, O *Wife*, says an Apostle, *whether thou shalt*
save thy Husband? Or *how knowest thou*, O *Man*,
whether

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whether thou shalt save thy Wife? His suggesting this to the *Conjugal Relation*, makes it no way improper to add, “how knowest thou, O Parent, or Master and Mistress, or Brother and Sister, or Friend and Neighbour, whether thou shalt save thy Children, or Servants, or Brethren, and Sisters, or thy other Friends and intimate Acquaintance?” ’Tis an universal Duty, to exhort one another daily, while it is called to Day; lest any of us be hardened thro’ the Deceitfulness of Sin. As we would abhor the Temper and Character of murderous Cain, we should never say as he did, *Am I my Brother’s Keeper?* By a Word spoken in due Season, only in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, and without the least Appearance of invading the Ministerial Office, it has often happened, that thoughtless Souls have been led to serious Consideration, and Self-Inquiry, so as to secure to themselves eternal Life. And what has been done, may be done again, and should be attempted by all the Lovers of Souls, in a humble Dependance upon his Grace, who died for them, and rose again.

Besides these private and personal Efforts, there are others of a publick and social Nature, by which both Clergy and Laity may concur together, for promoting a more general Spread of religious Self-Inquiry. Instances of this Kind have been in every Age: And, bad as the present Age may be in other Respects, I am far from thinking, that in this, we can justly say, *the former Days were better than these.* The present Century began with the numerous and ever memorable

morable *Societies for Reformation of Manners* thro' Great Britain and Ireland, which were well known to have been chiefly contrived, and supported, by the happy Union of the pious and publick-spirited both among *Clergy* and *Laity*. About the same Time, and with the same united Spirit, were also formed, in *England* and *Scotland*, the *Societies for propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts*. Not to mention what has also been done, within the same Period, and of the same Nature and Tendency, by our *Fellow-Protestants* in other Parts of *Europe*. By a divine Blessing on these vigorous and well-concerted Measures, there is Reason to hope, that a Concern for serious Piety was not only revived and spread in *these Nations*, and other Parts of the *Protestant World*; but also, that considerable Numbers of the *Heathen*, and *Mahometan Natives* of *Asia*, *Africa*, and *America*, have embraced the Gospel under all the peculiar Advantages of a *Protestant Profession*. This appears, by the Success which has attended the *Protestant Missionaries*, both in the *East*, and *West-Indies*; together with what is lately begun among those unhappy *African Negroes*, who are *Slaves* in many of our *American Colonies*, but especially in *Virginia*, where many of them are gladly receiving the Gospel, under the *stated Ministrations* in the Neighbourhoods in which their *Masters* reside. These happy Events, taken in their due Connection, seem to distinguish the *present Century* from all former Centuries, as the *only one*, in which serious Piety has been making some considerable Advances among many of the *Natives*

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Natives of every Quarter of the Globe. All these, we hope, are only the Dawnings of a more illustrious Day.

Scarce any one of the *Societies*, now referred to, has a more direct Tendency, in Proportion to its Extent, to revive, or to spread religious *Self-Inquiry*, than that which calls itself, *the Society for promoting religious Knowledge among the Poor*. This was begun in *London, August, 1750*. Its numerous Members, who are principally of the *Laity*, and indeed of different religious Persuasions, are nevertheless well united in the Choice of the most *practical Books* in Divinity, and in bestowing them upon any *necessitous Objects* that are recommended to their Charity, without regarding any other Distinction. God grant, that the Accounts, which this *Society* appears to have received already, from various and remote Parts of these *Islands*, as well as from our remoter *American Colonies*, may only prove an Earnest of yet more numerous and more delightful Accounts, which shall be communicated to them in Time to come!

But to crown all these Endeavours, both of *Clergy* and *Laity*, towards spreading thro' our dear *native Land*, and thro' the *whole Earth*, a serious Concern for eternal Things in every human Breast, we cannot wish to have any Thing added so important in every View, as a *Spirit of Prayer for the further Coming of the Kingdom of God*. Certainly *that*, above all other Expedients, would have the most encouraging Aspect, both upon our own Age, and upon

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Ages

Ages to come. Without *Prayer*, the best-concerted Schemes are very defective, and the most vigorous Efforts are neither rightly prepared for Success or Disappointment. Nothing is more reasonable, than to *acknowledge God*, by *Prayer*, in all our *Ways*. And it should be considered, that there is peculiar Need for *this Acknowledgement*, when our Attempts more immediately relate to *the Kingdom of God* in our World; and consequently to an Interest, which is sure to be opposed by whole *Legions*, not only of evil Spirits, but of those perverse Passions and Prejudices, which govern the Views of most Men, and from which we dare not say our own Hearts are perfectly free. Tho' it must be allowed, that to *pray* for the Progress and Success of the Gospel, in the Conviction and Conversion of Sinners, and in the Edification of Saints, is equally the Duty of all Persons and Times; yet it is also manifest, that when *God prepares the Heart* of his People to *pray*, it is a Token for good, that *he will cause his Ear to hear*. If *Zion's Friends will not for Zion's Sake hold their Peace*, and for *Jerusalem's Sake will not rest*, there is Reason to hope, *the Righteousness thereof* is about to go forth as *Brightness*, and the *Salvation thereof* as a *Lamp that burneth*; and that e'er long *God will establish, and will make Jerusalem a Praise in the Earth*. If the Lord *Jesus Christ* peculiarly encourages the united *Prayers* of his People, by promising, that if but two of them shall agree on Earth, as touching any Thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them by his Father which is in Heaven;

Heaven; then, surely, we may conclude *the Promise shall not fail*, when *Multitudes of praying Souls*, in different *Nations*, and in different *Quarters of the Globe*, of different *religious Persuasions*, and *Forms of Worship*, shall animate each other's *Faith and Fervour*, by *explicitly agreeing together*, both as to the *important Matter*, and as to the *solemn Season of Prayer*. And, blessed be *God*, this is not a Thing that exists only in *Idea*, but, even in this degenerate Day, has some glorious Reality.

The *first printed Agreement* of this Sort, that I ever met with, was published by *Dr. Doddridge*, February, 1741-2, in a *Copy of an Association at Northampton, for propagating the Kingdom of Christ in the World*, placed in the Margin of the *Dedication of his Sermon on the Evil and Danger of neglecting Souls*. Page viii. The Articles of that Society, so far as they relate to *Prayer*, were these. “ 1. That we purpose, as *God* shall enable us, to be *daily putting up some earnest Petitions to the Throne of Grace*, for the *Advancement of the Gospel in the World*, and for the *Success of all the faithfull Servants of Christ*, who are engaged in the *Work of it*, especially among the *Heathen Nations*.—2. That we will *assemble at least Four Times a Year*, in our Place of publick *Worship*, at such *Seasons as shall by mutual Consent be appointed*, to spend some *Time in solemn Prayer together* on this important Account.—3. We do hereby express our *Desire*, that some *Time* may be then spent, if *God* give an Opportunity, in re-
 b 2 “ *viewing*

“ viewing those *Promises of Scripture*, which relate to the *Establishment of our Redeemer’s Kingdom in the World*; that our Faith may be supported, and our *Prayers* quickened, by the *Contemplation of them*”.

The next was a printed *Memorial from several Ministers in Scotland to their Brethren in different Places for continuing a Concert for Prayer, first entered into in the Year 1744*. This is to be seen in Vol. 2. Page 399—402, of a Work intituled, *Historical Collections relating to remarkable Periods of the Success of the Gospel, and eminent Instruments employed in promoting it*; compiled by the Rev. Mr. John Gillies, one of the *Ministers of Glasgow*. Printed by Foulis 1754. The *Memorial* informs us, that the *Concert* was first begun, with an immediate and special Regard to the *Coming of the Kingdom of God*, and the *Success of the Gospel of Christ in our World*, by some *Ministers* and others in *Scotland 1744*, and was then extended only to *two Years*: But, at the earnest Desire of several *Ministers* and others in *America*, it was renewed in 1746, and agreed upon for the *seven following Years*. We are also told, after the Copy of the *Memorial*, that the Time agreed on for the Continuance of the *Concert* being elapsed, it was farther proposed and agreed, by several *Ministers* and *Societies* in *Scotland*, to continue it for *seven Years more*; that is, from *June 3d, 1754*. To this last *Agreement* is added a general Invitation and Intreaty, that all, into whose Hands it may come, would join in so happy an Expedient for promoting the

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the *Kingdom of God*, and the *Success of the Gospel of Christ in our World*. The *Articles of this Concert for Prayer* seem to be an Improvement upon those published by *Dr. Doddridge*; particularly, in determining, that *some Part of every Saturday Evening*, and *every Lord's-Day-Morning*, should be *more privately* devoted to the Purposes of the *Concert*; and that the same should be made a *publick Exercise*, once every *Quarter of a Year*; namely, on the *First Tuesdays* in the *Months of February, May, August, and November*; or, at least, on such other Days, nigh to these, as should be found most agreeable to the State and Circumstances of particular *Societies and Congregations*. It is also expressly provided, in the *Memorial*, that these particular Determinations be considered as *Friendly Resolutions*, which may be altered by each *Person*, or *Society*, at Discretion, and be adapted to all the various Circumstances of different *People, Times, and Places*, so as perfectly to consist with the most extensive *Christian Liberty*. In the Pages now referred to in the *Historical Collections*, we have an Account of the great Progress this *Concert* has made in *New-England* and other Parts of the *British Colonies in America*, where many *Ministers*, private *Christians*, yea, *Congregations* and *Churches*, have entered into it, and continue to enter. In one of the Letters from thence, a Minister writes, *May 23d, 1749*,
 “ ’Tis Matter of great Thankfullness and Joy,
 “ that God puts it into the Hearts of so many,
 “ in various Parts, to unite in extraordinary Prayer
 “ for

“ for the *coming of Christ's Kingdom*: And surely
 “ it bodes well. It would tend to cause this
 “ *Concert* to prevail much more here, if we
 “ could hear that it was greatly spreading and
 “ prevailing on your Side of the *Atlantick Oce-*
 “ *an*, where it was first begun, and from whence
 “ it was first proposed to us”. With an imme-
 diate Reference to the *Concert for Prayer*, it ap-
 pears that the Rev. Mess. *Sewall, Prince, Webb,*
Foxcroft, and Gee, Pastors in Boston, publicly
 declare, “ And this Design we cannot but re-
 “ commend to all, who desire the *coming of that*
 “ *blissfull Kingdom*, in its promised Extent and
 “ *Glory*, in this wretched World”.

Tho' the above *Agreements* relating to *Prayer*
 for the coming of the Kingdom of God, and the Suc-
 cess of the Gospel of Christ in our World, are the
 only Instances of the Kind, that I have ever
 seen in *Print*; yet I doubt not there have been
 many, of the same Nature and Tendency,
 which have never been made known beyond the
 particular Neighbourhoods where they were
 transacted, or the little Circle of Persons im-
 mediately concerned in them; and perhaps merely
 depending on *Verbal Promises* and an *Union of*
Hearts, without ever committing any Particulars
 to *Writing*. One such Instance, I have the
 Pleasure to observe, is yet remaining among my
Kidderminster-Friends, who, with a distinct and
 immediate View to the *Interest of Christ*, and the
Spread of his Gospel thro' the Earth, have privately
 met together, once every Month, and spent about
 two Hours in Prayer; and this Practice they
 have

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have now continued between *Twenty* and *Thirty Years*, which is more than double the Time since my first coming to this Place. Some of them remember, how my worthy Predecessors encouraged, and their pious *Fore-Fathers* were engaged in, the same Design, which, in Connection with more important Motives, would have its proper Weight with them to maintain the Practise.

On the whole, there is Nothing I would more earnestly intreat of my *Readers*, next to the securing their own Personal Interest in *Christ*, than their heartily joining in such benevolent *Prayers* for the more glorious *coming of his Kingdom* among all Men. And perhaps some may be the rather induced to ingage in this good Work, by considering, that tho' Providence may have rendered them incapable of contributing towards most other *Schemes* and *Efforts* for promoting the Success of the Gospel, and the Spread of religious *Self-Inquiry*; yet they can have no just Objection to this of *Prayer*, which lies as open to the *Poor*, as to the *Rich*, and may be practised by Persons in the *greatest Obscurity*, as well as by those in the most *eminent Stations*. Certainly *the Poor of this World* may be *Rich in Faith*, and therefore *Rich in Prayer*; so that even *their Power and Interest* at the Throne of Grace, may, according to the infallible Estimation of Heaven, be equal to that of *Princes*, who *wrestle with God and prevail*. Thus, by their *Prayers*, it may be easy for *their deep Poverty* to abound unto the *Riches of their Liberality* towards Millions of their much more impoverished *Fellow-Men*.——But, it is
more

more especially desireable, for giving the widest Spread to this pious, rational, and scriptural Scheme for *Prayer*, that *God* would graciously incline the Hearts of *Ministers* of all different Denominations, to exert themselves to the utmost, in Order to carry it into Execution, wherever their Influence extends. And as soon as *Zion* shall, in this Sense, *travail*, we are then taught by divine Promises to infer, that *she shall bring forth her Children, she shall break forth on the right Hand, and on the left, and her Seed shall inherit the Heathen Lands, and make the desolate Cities to be inhabited.*

With Respect to the *following Sermons*, I have only this to add, that a divine Blessing has *already* attended them, from the Pulpit, with Efficacy to some Souls, both for beginning a divine Life, where it was wanting, and for improving it, where it was begun; it is therefore my chearfull Hope, that the compassionate *Redeemer* will not *now* despise such a *Mite*, which, in this more publick Manner, is *cast into his sacred Treasury.*

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B. FAWCETT.

*Kidderminster,**Dec. 4. 1755.*

S E R M O N I.

The *GRAND INQUIRY* &c.

2 CORINTHIANS V. 17. first Part.

Therefore if any Man be in Christ —

AMONG the various Professors of Christianity nothing is more generally acknowledged than the high Importance of having a clear and undoubted Title to the Christian Character. If we apprehend our Neighbour's Title unexceptionably good, we silently congratulate his Happiness : If we deliberately judge, that this is our own Case, we are presently conscious of some Degree of that *Peace of God which passeth all Understanding*. On the other Hand, if we are obliged to look on any around us, however fond of their Christian Name, as having no Title to the *Thing* itself, which that lovely *Name* imports, their Mistake is the Object of our Pity, and we secretly wish to have their Error seasonably corrected, and all its tremendous Consequences effectually prevented. But if ever we entertain such dismal Thoughts

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of

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of our own State and Character, we are unavoidably frightened at ourselves, feel an inward Torment which we cannot sufficiently express, and perhaps conclude ourselves of *all Men the most miserable*.

It may happen that the Judgment we form of our own religious State, whether a peaceful or tormenting one, may be equally unsupported by Truth; and neither one, nor the other have any Existence but in our Imagination. Probably there are Multitudes, who glory in their Christianity, but without the least Appearance of the Christian Temper; who hope for Salvation by *Christ*, but their *Hope* is that of the *Hypocrite* which *shall perish*. Nor is it less probable, that amongst the serious and devout there are not a few, whose Piety wears a very discouraging Aspect, and who are numbering themselves amongst Hypocrites and Unbelievers.

These mistaken Apprehensions can only be rectified by a due Attention to the *Sacred Volume*. This only is *the Light of our Feet, and the Lamp of our Paths*, safely to lead us out of the Labyrinth of our own perplexed Thoughts and Reasonings. The Passages of Scripture, which have this happy Tendency, are innumerable, among which the Words of the Text are not the least distinguishing.

It seems the Church at *Corinth* was not without a Mixture of *nominal* with *real* Christians. Though the Apostle chiefly addresses himself to the latter, yet he was unavoidably led to speak of the former, as Persons *which gloried in Appearance*

ance, and not in Heart (a) ; who were false Apostles, deceitful Workers, transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ (b). No Wonder such Persons looked upon Paul with Envy, and upon all the Transports of his holy Zeal as the mere Effects of Madness. That these were their Thoughts of him, appears by the manner in which he vindicates himself : *Whether we be besides ourselves*, says he, *it is to God ; or whether we be sober it is for your Cause. For the Love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead : And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no Man after the Flesh ; yea, though we have known Christ after the Flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more (c).* After this complete Vindication, the Apostle proceeds, in the Words of the Text and those which immediately follow, to an Inference which equally concerns both *nominal* and *real* Christians ; which effectually takes forth the precious from the vile, and plainly teaches every Man, how to ascertain the Validity, or Insufficiency of his Title to the Christian Character. *Therefore if any Man be in Christ, he is a new Creature : Old Things are past away ; behold, all Things are become new.* Here is a Case proposed, in which every Man is interested, who makes any Profession of Christianity,

A 2

nity,

(a) 2 Cor. v. 12. (b) 2 Cor. xi. 13.

(c) 2 Cor. v. 13—16.

nity ; and a *Rule of Judgment* laid down, by which every Professor may try himself with all desirable Perspicuity and Precision. The Proposal is so interesting, the Rule of Judgment is so satisfactory, that one is ready to conclude, that every Hearer will anticipate the Design of this Discourse, by an immediate and particular Application, *Am I in Christ?* Nothing is more desirable than to cherish a Disposition to such an Inquiry : Nor can any Thing be more suitable to the Apostle's Design. Therefore, to encourage every Hearer to the personal Inquiry, and at the same Time to illustrate the Meaning of the Text, let us confine our Thoughts to the following

Observation. *Am I in Christ, or not? is an Inquiry, which may help any Man to know the State of his own Soul.*

- I. It will be proper to explain the Inquiry, what it is for *any Man* to be in Christ.
 - II. To prove that *any Man* may know whether he has an Interest in Christ, or not.
 - III. To point out some of the Reasons, why many Persons never know whether they have an Interest in Christ, or not.
 - IV. To urge all to make this grand Inquiry, who have hitherto neglected it.
- First*, It is of no little Importance to explain the full Meaning and genuine Import of the Inquiry, what it is for *any Man* to be in Christ.

To

To be in Christ, “ is to have a Personal Interest in the Blessings of eternal Salvation, “ which Christ has promised to all them, and “ them only, that obey him (d)”. —In this Sense the Phrase frequently occurs. Particularly, when Paul says of himself, *I have suffered the Loss of all Things, and do count them but Dung that I may win Christ ; and be found “ in him”* (e). His *Loss of all Things*, in the present World, could only be counterbalanced by his *Gain of eternal Blessings in Christ*. Nor can he mean any Thing less than this, when he says of others, *there is therefore now no Condemnation to them which are “ in Christ Jesus”, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit* (f) ; that is, they, and only they, who obey Christ by a holy Walk, have a clear Title to final Acceptance and complete Salvation by him. Elsewhere the Apostle more distinctly enumerates those Blessings which the Saints receive from Christ, and which they receive as the Gift of God ; *of whom are ye “ in “ Christ Jesus”, who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption* (g). To be in Christ must therefore include the whole distinguishing Character and Happiness of a true Christian. This is farther confirmed by the Clause which immediately follows the Text, when considered in its proper Connection with it : *If any Man be in Christ, he is a new Creature*. If being a new Creature was not

A 3 essential,

(d) Heb. v. 9. (e) Phil. iii. 8, 9.
(f) Rom. viii. 1. (g) 1 Cor. i. 30.

essential, both to the Character and Happiness of a true Christian, or, in the Language of the Text, to a *Man's being in Christ*, our blessed Lord would not have so solemnly declared, *verily, verily, I say unto you, except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God (h).*

And is it the whole of a true Christian to *be in Christ*? Surely if any Thing can render the Expression yet more important, it must be the manner in which it is used in the Text; where, under the insinuating Form of a Supposition, the Apostle most inoffensively excites every Man to apply the grand Inquiry to himself. “Come then, O my Soul!” let each of us be saying to ourselves, “improve the salutary
“Hint; enter the Fields of Self-Inquiry; penetrate the deepest Recesses of a treacherous
“Heart, and try what Concern thou hast in the
“Powers, Principles and Pleasures of a Life
“peculiar to the true Christian. Does the great
“Apostle suggest, for universal Advantage—
“*if any Man be in Christ*?—Nothing can be
“more rational in itself, more subservient, O
“my Soul! to thine eternal Interest, or more
“consistent with the Apostle’s Meaning, than to
“ask thyself, *am I in Christ*?

“Is my *Character* that of a true Christian?
“Am I dissatisfied with the mere *Name*, unless I have also the *Thing*? Do I renounce all
“undue Dependence on my best Performances,
“or inward Dispositions; abhorring the Thought
“of

“ of making a Saviour of any Duties done by me,
 “ or of any Virtues, or Graces wrought in
 “ me? Whilst I profess to depend upon *Christ*
 “ alone for Salvation, am I solicitous to know,
 “ and, when known, to find in myself, the ge-
 “ nuine Evidences of an Interest in *Christ*? Do
 “ I esteem the most zealous Attachment to any
 “ *Party* of Christians, to any *Form of Worship*,
 “ or to any *Scheme of Doctrine*, abstracted from
 “ *Holiness* of Heart and Life, to be an insuffi-
 “ cient Evidence of an Interest in *Christ*? Is the
 “ Word of God the only *Standard* by which I
 “ measure the Size of my Christian Character,
 “ the only *Touchstone* by which I try its Sincer-
 “ ity, and the only *Rule* to which I reduce its
 “ Virtues and Graces? Have I, according to
 “ that Holy Word, been *convinced of Sin* (i)?
 “ Have I had such a Sense of my Sins, both of
 “ Heart and Life, of their abominable Pollution,
 “ of their dreadful Guilt, and the everlasting
 “ Condemnation and Ruin, to which they ex-
 “ pose me, as to be weary of my State and Con-
 “ dition, and even to *labour, and be heavy laden*,
 “ like one that is pressed down under an insup-
 “ portable Burthen; And, despairing of Help
 “ and Ease any other Way, have I ever come to
 “ *Christ to find Rest unto my Soul* (k)? Was I
 “ firmly persuaded, that *Christ is able, and willing*,
 “ *to save them to the uttermost, that come unto*
 “ *God by him* (l)? Did I cordially approve,
 A 4 “ and

(i) *John* xvi. 8. (k) *Mat.* xi. 28, 29.
 (l) *John* vi. 37. *Heb.* vii. 27. compared,

“ and gratefully rejoice in, the appointed Way
 “ of Salvation by *Repentance towards God, and*
 “ *Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ* (m)? Is
 “ mine a *Repentance unto Life* (n); a Turning
 “ *from dead Works, to serve the living God*? Is
 “ it sincere, universal and persevering, even a
 “ *Repentance to Salvation not to be repented of* (o)?
 “ Will my Faith in *Christ* stand the Trial? Is
 “ its Nature and are its Fruits divine? Does it,
 “ like *the Centurion’s Faith*, lay me low in the
 “ most affecting Sense of my own *Unworthiness*
 “ of *Christ’s* Regard, at the same Time that it
 “ fills me with the most adoring Confidence in
 “ him, as an all-sufficient Redeemer (p)? Is
 “ it, like *the Faith of the Syrophenician Woman*,
 “ not only self-abasing, and Christ-exalting, but
 “ likewise so importunate for his Blessings as to
 “ take no Denial (q)? Unclean as my Nature
 “ is, and filled with corrupt Propensities, does
 “ my Faith derive *Virtue from Christ, to heal*
 “ the most inveterate Diseases of my Soul (r)?
 “ Does it *purify my Heart* (s), and implant there
 “ every divine Principle and holy Disposition?
 “ Does it, as *the Substance of Things hoped for,*
 “ *and the Evidence of Things not seen,* enable me
 “ to overcome a smiling, or a frowning World
 “ (t)? Worthy of its Heavenly Extraction,
 “ does it work by Love (u), and make me
 “ zealous

(m) *Acts* xx. 21. (n) *Acts* xi. 28.

(o) 2 *Cor.* vii. 10. (p) *Mat.* viii. 8, 9.

(q) *Mat.* xv. 22—27. (r) *Mark* v. 34.

(s) *Acts* xv. 9, (t) 1 *John* v. 4. (u) *Gal.* v. 6.

“ zealous and faithful, disinterested and indefatigable, in serving my God and Saviour, my Fellow-Creatures, and especially *them who are of the Household of Faith*? Whatever my religious Attainments may seem, am I still solicitous to *abide in Christ, that I may bring forth much Fruit*, deeply sensible that *without Christ, like a Branch broken off from the Root, I can do Nothing* (w)? Therefore, *forgetting those Things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those Things which are before, do I press toward the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus* (x)? Am I *rejoicing in every Service, or Suffering, by which I am made more like Jesus, and more ready to meet him, when his Glory shall be revealed*? And *when I have done all those Things which are commanded, do I really esteem myself an unprofitable Servant* (y); infinitely obliged to the Mercy of God in Christ Jesus my Lord for my present Acceptance, and future Reward? *Search me, O God, and know my Heart; try me, and know my Thoughts, and help me to see what my Character is, that I may know whether I am in Christ, or not.*

“ And if, through Grace, there be any Reason for me to hope, that I am possessed, though in a small Degree, of the *real Character*, will not that include in it a proportionable Claim to

“ the

(w) *John* xv. 5. (x) *Phil.* iii. 13, 14.

(y) *Luke* xvii. 10.

The grand Inquiry

“ the distinguishing Happiness of the true Chris-
 “ tian? Am I not *made accepted in the beloved*
 “ *Jesus (z)? Is not mine the Blessedness of the*
 “ *Man to whom the Lord will not impute Sin (a)?*
 “ May I not, with appropriating Confidence,
 “ look upon the holy and glorious Majesty of
 “ Heaven and Earth, as *having reconciled me to*
 “ *himself by Jesus Christ (b)?* May I not con-
 “ clude, that *the Son of God, unworthy as I am, loved*
 “ *me, and gave himself for me (c)?* And that *the Spi-*
 “ *rit of God does itself bear Witness, in some De-*
 “ *gree, with my Spirit, that I am the Child of God*
 “ *(d)?* what then should prevent me from applying
 “ to myself his *exceeding great and precious Promi-*
 “ *ses, with all the unconceivable and inestimable*
 “ *Blessings contained in them? Whether the*
 “ *World, or Life, or Death, or Things present,*
 “ *or Things to come, may I not say, they are all*
 “ *mine, because Christ is mine, and I am his*
 “ *(e)?* Are not *Saints on Earth, and Saints in*
 “ *Heaven Fellow-Citizens with me of the new Je-*
 “ *rusalem, and Fellow-Members of the House-*
 “ *hold of God (f)?* Are not *Holy Angels the*
 “ *ministring Spirits, sent forth to minister for*
 “ *me, as one of the Heirs of Salvation (g)?* Am
 “ I not *begotten, according to the abundant Mercy*
 “ *of the God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,*
 “ *unto a lively Hope, of an Inheritance incorrupti-*
 “ *ble,*

(z) *Eph. i. 6.* (a) *Rom. iv. 8.*

(b) *2 Cor. v. 18.* (c) *Gal. ii. 20.*

(d) *Rom. viii. 16.* (e) *1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.*

(f) *Ephes. ii. 19.* (g) *Heb. i. 14.*

“ ble, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,
“ reserved in Heaven for me (b)? And is not all
“ this Felicity placed for me on the firmest Ba-
“ sis, even that of an everlasting Covenant, or-
“ dered in all Things and sure (i)?

“ Is this the intimate Connection between the
“ true Christian’s Character and Happiness? Is
“ this the just and comprehensive Import of
“ each, tho’ but feebly described? ’Tis im-
“ possible, O my Soul! to ask thyself any
“ Question so interesting, so important, as this,
“ *Am I in Christ?*

Secondly, We are to prove, that *any*
Man may know whether he has an In-
terest in *Christ* or not.

The Arguments for this Purpose are such, as every serious Mind will acknowledge to be as intelligible, and convincing, as the Inquiry itself is important. It is only to consider,—the manner in which the Divine Oracles direct us to attain this Knowledge;—the evident Tendency of Scripture-Promises to produce it;—the peculiar Concern it has with the Offices and Characters of the Holy Spirit, as a Reprover and Comforter;—and the Experience of Multitudes by whom it has been actually attained.

1. That *any Man* may know whether he has an Interest in *Christ*, or not, appears, “ from the manner in which the
“ divine Oracles direct us to attain
“ this Knowledge”.

There

There is no plainer Direction, how to know whether we have a Personal Interest in *Christ* or not, than that which our Text introduces. We are taught to consider our *new Creation* as an undoubted Evidence of our Interest in *Christ*. And that an Evidence of so much Importance might not be misapprehended, we are told, what we are to understand by our *new Creation*, in the Words which immediately follow : *Old Things are past away ; behold, all Things are become new.* Let any *Man* try all Things in the Temper of his Mind, as well as in the Conduct of his Life, whether they be *old* or *new* ; that is, whether they be as foolish and sinfull, as corrupt and vicious as ever, and therefore *old* ; or remarkably and universally changed into wise and holy, pure and heavenly, and therefore *new*. By following this Part of the divine Counsel, any *Man* may in some Measure discern, what Answer belongs to the grand Inquiry, *Am I in Christ*, or not ?

Another Direction, of equal Importance, but recommended in this Epistle with great Earnestness, is, *examine yourselves, whether ye be in the Faith ; prove your own selves ; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be Reprobates (k) ?* Can any two Characters be more opposite than, either, to have in us the Temper of *Jesus Christ* ; or, be so destitute of it, and averse to it, as to be Reprobates, like Silver that will not stand the Touchstone ? Is any Duty more apparently necessary than to examine, which
of

(k) 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

of these opposite Characters is our own? And, if this Duty is performed, what can hinder our obtaining some Degree of Self-Knowledge, as the certain Consequence of such Self-Examination?

The same Apostle directs the *Galatians* how to judge of their spiritual State, by pointing out to them the different Fruits, which would certainly be produced in their Temper and Conduct, in some Proportion to the Prevalence of *Fleshly*, or *Spiritual* Principles in their Hearts. And because none but true Christians can experience the universal Prevalence of *Spiritual* Principles, over those that are *Fleshly*, he therefore concludes, for the Satisfaction of all true Christians, and for the Conviction of all such as have only the Name of Christians, *they that are Christ's have crucified the Flesh, with the Affections and Lusts* (l).

Another *Apostle*, having exhorted Christians to cultivate every Grace and Virtue belonging to those that are *Partakers of a divine Nature*, infers, that by this Means their *Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and consequently of their own Interest in him, would greatly increase: Whereas, by neglecting to cultivate every Grace and Virtue, they would certainly reduce themselves to a State of great spiritual *Blindness* and *Impotence*. He then resumes the Exhortation, and urges it with redoubled Force, *wherefore the rather, Brethren, give Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure* (m). They could not but know, that they were already called to an *outward Profession*

B

of

(l) *Gal. v. 17—24.*

(m) *2 Pet. i. 4—10*

of Christianity; and therefore the least Part of the Apostle's Meaning must be, that by the diligent Cultivation of every Grace and Virtue, which constitutes a divine Nature, they might certainly arrive at some satisfactory Evidence of their own Personal Interest in *Christ*.

It seems to have been one leading Design of the Apostle *John*, in writing his first Epistle, to help his Fellow-Christians to discern their own spiritual State; that they themselves might have the Joy, and that Religion might have the Credit, which such a comfortable Discovery would naturally occasion. *These Things*, says he, *write we unto you, that your Joy may be full.—And hereby we do know, that we know him, if we keep his Commandments.—But whoso keepeth his Word, in him verily is the Love of God perfected; hereby know we, that we are in him.—We know, that we have passed from Death unto Life, because we love the Brethren.—And he that keepeth his Commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know, that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.—These Things have I written unto you, that believe on the Name of the Son of God; that ye may know, that ye have eternal Life; and that ye may believe on the Name of the Son of God (n).* By comparing such Passages as these, in *John's* Epistle, with what we have in his Gospel, we have good Reason to infer, that our blessed Lord also intended to instruct his Disciples, how to discern their own Personal Interest in himself; since he so frequently assures them,

(n) 1 *John* i. 4. ii. 3, 5. iii. 14, 24. v. 13.

them, that their Obedience to his Commandments would be an undoubted Evidence of their Love to him, and consequently of their Interest in him. *If ye love me, keep my Commandments.—He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.—He that loveth me not, keepeth not my Sayings (o).*

These are a few, indeed very few, of the many Instances in which the holy Scriptures direct us how to know whether we have a Personal Interest in *Christ*, or not. And shall all these stand for Nothing? Dreadful as the Thought is, there is no avoiding it, if the grand Inquiry, *am I in Christ*, or not, will not admit of a determinate Answer.

2. It may also be argued, that “ the
“ Promises of Scripture have an evi-
“ dent Tendency to help *any Man*
“ to know whether he has an Interest
“ in *Christ*, or not”.

So numerous are the Promises, and so perfectly suitable is any one of them to illustrate the Force of our Argument, that to be curious in selecting would be altogether needless. That Declaration, *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved (p)*, tho’ of a general and comprehensive Import, may nevertheless be properly applied as the firm Basis of Consolation, or Self-Condernation to any particular Soul. That the *true Christian* may derive some chearful Hope from hence, concerning his own Salvation, he takes this Promise in its intimate Connection with the Character to which it is an-

B 2

nexed,

(o) *John* xiv. 15, 21, 24. (p) *Mark* xvi. 16.

nexed, and reasons in some such Manner as this ;
 “ I am not only baptized in the Name of *Christ*,
 “ but I hope I have true Faith in him. I find in
 “ myself, adored be rich Grace ! a deep Sense of
 “ my own Unworthiness, high Esteem for *Christ*,
 “ ardent Love to him, Hatred of all Sin for his
 “ Sake, and full *Purpose of Heart* to spend all
 “ I am and have in his Service. I tremble at the
 “ Thought of sharing in the present Character,
 “ and final Condemnation of Unbelievers. I am
 “ often crying, *Lord, I believe, help me against my*
 “ *Unbelief* (q). *Lord, increase my Faith* (r). I hope,
 “ therefore, it is not Presumption in me to say,
 “ *I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*, and, accord-
 “ ing to his Promise, *I shall be saved*”. On the
 other Hand, how can the mere *nominal Christian*
 avoid seasonable Conviction and Self-Condemna-
 tion, if he will but allow himself to inquire, whe-
 ther the Baptism he has received, and the Faith
 which he therefore professeth, are producing in
 him such Fruits as deep Humility and Self-Abase-
 ment before God, sincere Love to *Christ*, Hatred
 of all Sin for *Christ’s* Sake, and Resolutions by
 divine Help for new and holy Obedience ? Will
 not his Conscience be obliged to testify against
 him, that none of these Fruits of saving Faith are
 found in him, that therefore the awful Remainder
 of our *Lord’s* Declaration too plainly belongs to
 him, *he that believeth not shall be damned* ?

In like Manner, the true Christian may take
 any Promise, of a more particular Kind, and
 more

(q) *Mark* ix. 24.(r) *Luke* xvii. 5.

more distinguishing Nature, and may apply to himself the Comfort resulting from it, if, through Grace, he can discern in himself the peculiar Characteristick, to which the Promise is made. Does the Christian perceive himself reduced to such a Sensibility of his own Meanness, Dependance and Guilt, as to be *poor in Spirit*? He may, with a Confidence that is perfectly consistent with the deepest Humility, pronounce himself *blessed, for the Kingdom of Heaven is his own* (s). —Doth he *mourn* for Sin, more than for all his worldly Sorrows and Disappointments? He may assure himself, that *Blessedness* is inseparably connected with such *Mourning*, for in due Time *he shall be comforted* (t) with those *Consolations of God* which are neither few nor *small*. —Has divine Grace so altered his Temper, that, from being haughty and passionate, he is become habitually *meek and lowly*? He is therefore intitled to the Promise, that *he shall inherit the Earth*, with a special *Blessing* from Heaven, upon all his earthly Enjoyments and Interests (u). —Doth he feel in himself such prevailing Appetites of Soul as *Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness*? *Blessed is he, for in the compleatest Sense he shall be filled* (w). —Is he *merciful* in all his Temper and Conduct towards them that are appointed to share in his Pity and Bounty? *Blessed is he, for he shall obtain Mercy*, from a merciful God and Saviour. —Is it his constant Labour, and fervent Prayer, to be *pure in Heart*; and his real Grief,

B 3

to

(s) *Mat. v. 3.* (t) *v. 4.* (u) *v. 5.* (w) *v. 6.*

to have any impure Thought or Affection enter there? Then *bleſſed is he, for he ſhall ſee,* and compleatly, and eternally enjoy, a God of unſpotted Purity and Perfection (x).

But if the *Nominal Chriſtian* thoroughly tries himſelf by each of theſe Characteriſticks, he will find, that, inſtead of ſpiritual *Poverty*, his Mind is intoxicated with an Apprehenſion of his own Worthineſs and Self-Sufficiency: Inſtead of *Mourning* for Sin, he will perceive, that his is *the Sorrow of the World which worketh Death*: Inſtead of *Chriſtian Meekneſs*, that he has either the Eaſe and Indolence of a Natural Temper, or is more openly or ſecretly indulging the Exceſſes of Wrath and Revenge, of Envy and Malice: Inſtead of *hungering and thiſting after Righteouſneſs*, that his moſt ſolicitous Inquiries have manifeſtly been, *what ſhall I eat, or drink, or wherewithall ſhall I be clothed?* Inſtead of the *Merciful Temper*, that his *tendereſt Mercies have been Cruelty*, if not to the Bodies, at leaſt to the Souls of thoſe around him: And inſtead of *Purity of Heart*, he cannot avoid this Conſciouſneſs, that his Heart has entertained unclean Thoughts and Affections, nor was ever diſpleaſed with their coming in, or their Stay there. Thus the farther he goes in his Self-Examination, the more apparently the Promiſes ſpeak a Curſe to him, rather than a *Bleſſing*, becauſe he is altogether deſtitute of the peculiar Characteriſticks to which the Promiſes are made.

In

(x) *Matt. v. 7, 8.*

In this Manner every Promise, whether of a more general, or a more particular Kind and Nature, has a most manifest Tendency to produce the Satisfaction, so much desired by the *true Christian*, concerning his Interest in *Christ*; and also the Self-Condernation which is equally necessary for the *Nominal Christian*. But if the One is not this Way to be attained, neither is the Other. And, if this was the Case, it might well be asked, to what End has God given his People so many great and precious Promises? Is it their Design to distribute Blessings promiscuously? Or rather, like the Cloud in the Wilderness, is not their bright Side towards *Israel*, at the same Time that they spread *Darkness* before the *Egyptians*? Certainly, where they meet not with the *Heirs of Promise*, there they are turned into dreadful Curses. God himself formed the Earth, he made it, he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited. Neither hath he spoke his Promises in vain. Nor shall his People in vain seek their peculiar Support and Comfort from them. There is Nothing the Blessed God more resents, than with Lies to make the Heart of the Righteous sad, whom He hath not made sad; and to strengthen the Hands of the Wicked, that he should not return from his wicked Way, by promising him Life (y). Is not the Spirit of God, both the Spirit of Truth, and the Spirit of Promise? — Thus, from the evident Tendency of Scripture-Promises, we are naturally led farther to argue,

B 4

3. “ That

(y) Ezek. xiii. 22.

The grand Inquiry

3. That *any Man* may know whether he has an Interest in *Christ*, or not,
 “ because this Knowledge has such a
 “ peculiar Concern with the Character
 “ and Office of the *Holy Spirit* both as
 “ a Reprover and a Comforter”.

Our blessed Lord expressly told his Disciples, *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: Even the Spirit of Truth, whom the World cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you* (z). This he said, partly, to comfort them in the mournfull Expectation of his being shortly seperated from them; and, partly, to encourage and animate them to manifest their *Love* to him by keeping his *Commandments*, to which he had just before been exhorting them. And what he promises *shall abide with them for ever*, cannot justly be confined to their own Persons; but must be interpreted as extending to all his obedient Disciples in all Ages. Accordingly the Apostle *Paul* tells the Saints at *Ephesus*, after that ye believed in *Christ*, ye were sealed with that *Holy Spirit of Promise* (a). And to the *Romans* the same Apostle says, ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father*. The Spirit itself beareth Witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God. And if Children, then Heirs;

(z) *John* xiv. 16, 17. (a) *Ephes.* i. 13.

Heirs ; Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Christ (b). He had a little before given them this, as his own Experience, the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us (c). And afterwards, that all of them might happily experience the same, he earnestly prays, Now the God of Hope fill you with all Joy and Peace in Believing, that ye may abound in Hope, through the Power of the Holy Ghost (d). In the Beginning of the Chapter to which our Text belongs, he resolves all his delightful Views of approaching Immortality, into the comforting Influences of the Holy Spirit. We know, says he, that if our earthly House of this Tabernacle were dissolved, we have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same Thing, is God, who also hath given unto us the Earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident; willing rather to be absent from the Body, and to be present with the Lord (e). And to shew that the Holy Spirit was given to others, for the same happy Purposes, he not only reminds his Converts at Ephesus, that the Spirit, with which they were sealed, was the Earnest of their Inheritance, untill the Redemption of the purchased Possession; but he also solemnly warns them, not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby they were sealed unto the Day of Redemption (f).

It

- (b) *Rom. viii. 15.—17.* (c) *Rom. v. 5.*
 (d) — *xv. 13.* (e) *2 Cor. v. 1, 5, 6, 8.*
 (f) *Ephes. i. 14. iv. 30.*

It should also be observed, that, as Conviction of Sin always goes before divine Consolation, for this Reason our Blessed Lord expressly declares, concerning the *Comforter*, whom he promises to send, that *when He is come, He will reprove the World of Sin (g)*. But in vain does the Holy Spirit sustain such Offices, if, in Consequence of his convincing Power, Sinners may not as clearly know that they have not yet an Interest in *Christ*, as Saints be enabled by his comforting Influences to conclude that their Interest in *Christ* is well-grounded.

On the whole, as we reasoned concerning the evident Tendency of Scripture-Promises, so we must in the present Case. If neither *real* nor *nominal Christians* can attain sufficient Evidence of their Interest in *Christ*, or their Want of it, then *Christ* has promised this divine Reprover and Comforter in vain ; and in vain does an Apostle talk of the Consolations of the Spirit, as experienced, either by himself, or others. Were we to consider, “ what Hand the Spirit of God “ has in this Work, assisting us in the Knowledge of ourselves, and in Order to an Assurance of our good State ; ’tis certain”, says a pious and judicious Divine, “ he indited and “ formed a Rule by which we must examine : “ He is the Author of those gracious Habits and “ Acts, in which our Conformity to the Rule “ consists : He helps us in the Exercise of Grace : “ He sometimes, no doubt, shines in upon the “ Mind,

“ Mind, enlightens, and, as it were, comments
 “ upon his own Work, makes it discerned and
 “ understood : He may sometimes assist in mak-
 “ ing the Conclusion ; embolden the Christian
 “ to determine in Favour of himself, which his
 “ great Modesty, Humility, and Timorousness
 “ made him shy of doing. Nor will I deny but
 “ he may sometimes, *in an immediate authoritative*
 “ *Manner*, interpose and decide the Question,
 “ that has long been depending in the Mind, in
 “ Favour of the Believer. I assert Nothing here,
 “ neither will I deny this is ever the Case. His
 “ more ordinary Method is to *witness with our*
 “ *Spirit, that we are the Children of God*. But he
 “ may possibly, *on Special Occasions*, that require
 “ it, witness to them, without much of their
 “ Concurrence in the Work : As when the more
 “ melancholy Christian, that dare scarce enter-
 “ tain a good Thought of himself, or any Thing
 “ he doth, has been long poring upon himself,
 “ and is still bewilder’d, involved in Darkness
 “ and Fears, the Divine Spirit may, at such a
 “ Time, through a special Dispensation of Grace
 “ and Favour, come into his Assistance ; speak
 “ Peace, pronounce and make a Decision in his
 “ Favour. But this we are not to promise our-
 “ selves, nor expect ; but wait for Evidence in
 “ the ordinary Way* ”. Once more,

4. We may surely and comfortably ar-
 gue from “ the Experience of Multi-
 “ tudes,

* *Bennet's Christian Oratory, Part i. Chap. ii. Sect.*
xi. 3d Edition, Page 572, 573.

“ tudes, who have obtained for them-
 “ selves a satisfactory Evidence of
 “ their Interest in *Christ*”.

With what appropriating Confidence does our Apostle declare his own Interest in the Love of *Christ*, when he says, *who loved me, and gave himself for me* (b)? How peacefull is the Reflection he makes on all his past Ingagements to *Christ*? *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that Day* (i). And, because he saw *that Day* approaching, how is he transported with the Prospect, and even anticipates the Triumph? *I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith; Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that Day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing* (k). Glorious and well-conducted Triumph! He takes Care to shew, that such joyfull Prospects beyond the Grave were far from being peculiar to himself. It is most unreasonable to imagine he would put such a *Stumbling-Block in the Way* of his Fellow-Christians, as must naturally arise from his expressing such Satisfaction concerning an Assurance of his own Personal Interest in *Christ*, if none could attain it but himself, or a few of his distinguishing Rank. Wisely does he
 make

(b) *Gal.* ii. 20. (i) *2 Tim.* i. 12.

(k) — iv. 7, 8.

make it the Characteristick, not of Apostles, but of Christians, to *love the last appearing of Christ*. And therefore to all true Christians is the Exhortation addressed by another Apostle, *to be looking for, and hastening unto, the Coming of the Day of God (l)*, as to them an Event, not of Terror, but Delight ; which will fulfill their Hopes, and compleat their Joys ; and to which they should tend, with such ardent Desires, and strong Emotions of Soul, as long absent Friends do to a pleasing Interview. Nor were such Exhortations given in vain, since it appears by a Testimony not to be disputed, that Multitudes of common Christians *took joyfully the Spoiling of their Goods, knowing in themselves that they had in Heaven a better and an enduring Substance (m)*. Not only Martyrs and Confessors ; but innumerable others, whose Faith was never brought to the *fiery Tryal*, have nevertheless lived and died with satisfactory Evidence of their own Personal Interest in *Christ*. “ Nor do I apprehend”, says the excellent Writer just now referred to, “ the Knowledge of our State, (call it *Assurance* if you please) so uncommon and extraordinary a Thing as some are apt to imagine ; understand by Assurance a satisfactory Evidence of the Thing, such as excludes all reasonable Doubts, and disquieting Fears of the contrary ; though, it may be, not all transient Suspicions and Jealousies. And such an Assurance and Certainty Multitudes have attained, and enjoy the

C

“ Comfort

“ Comfort of; and indeed it is of so high Importance, that it is a Wonder any thoughtful Christian, that believes an Eternity, can be easy one Week or Day without it †”.—Is it wonderful, that any thoughtful Christian should be easy one Week or Day, without the satisfactory Evidence of his Personal Interest in *Christ*? Does Scripture, and Experience abundantly prove, that this Satisfaction is attainable? What then shall we say, or think, of Multitudes, who live and die, without ever attaining it?—Therefore, in Order to open a more distinct View, to all *nominal Christians*, of their unjust Claims to an Interest in *Christ*; and to all *true Christians*, of their very different Attainments in the divine Life, we should proceed,

Thirdly, To point out some of the Reasons, why many Persons never know whether they have an Interest in *Christ* or not; but this we shall do in the next Discourse.

† *Bennet, ib. page 568, 569.*

S E R M O N II.

S E R M O N II.

The *GRAND INQUIRY*, &c.

2 CORINTHIANS V. 17. first Part.

Therefore if any Man be in Christ—

I Have read of “ a certain Prince’s Servant,
 “ whose Fidelity and Diligence were so
 “ pleasing to his Master, that he promised
 “ to give him whatever he would ask. It hap-
 “ pened the Servant fell sick, and was near
 “ Death. In his Extremity he earnestly re-
 “ quested a Visit from his Prince, who being
 “ come to his Bed-Side, asked, what he desired
 “ of him? The Servant begged, that he might
 “ not die, but live *some Years* longer. The
 “ Prince told him, he must ask something else,
 “ for that was not in his Power. The Servant
 “ then begs to live *one Year*, or *one Month*, and
 “ at last if it was but *one Day*. The Prince con-
 “ tinued to tell him, that what he asked was
 “ quite out of his Power to grant, and that he
 “ must ask Money, or Preferment, or Physick,
 “ or other Things that were in his Power. But

“ the Servant replied, that he needed neither
 “ Money, nor Perferment, nor Physick, for none
 “ of these could prolong his Life *one Day*; and
 “ therefore, since he could not prolong his Life,
 “ he begged of him the *Assurance of his Salvati-*
 “ *tion*, that, if he must die, he might die in Peace,
 “ and with Assurance to be saved. This De-
 “ mand very much afflicted the Prince, who
 “ told him, that his Salvation depended upon
 “ the Grace of God, and consequently was not
 “ in his Power to promise, much less to give.
 “ The disappointed Servant, turning from his
 “ Prince to the Wall, cried out, in great Distress,
 “ *O Wretch that I am! Have I spent all my Life*
 “ *in serving a Master, that is not able to assist me in*
 “ *my greatest Need; not so much as to give me one*
 “ *Hour's Life? I will no longer serve a Master so*
 “ *impotent.* Upon this he solemnly vowed to God,
 “ *if he would restore him to Health, he would serve*
 “ *God only, and mind the Concerns of his Soul, and*
 “ *give himself up to a Lord, who was able to give*
 “ *him eternal Life.* It pleased God to restore him
 “ to Health, and for some Years he lived a holy
 “ Life, and at last died comfortably”.—Let this
 Story teach us, that *to whom we yield ourselves Ser-*
vants to obey, his Servants we are to whom we obey;
whether of Sin, unto Death; or of Obedience, unto
Righteousness (n). Therefore let not any of us
 slay, till a Death-Bed convince us of our Need
 of serving *Christ*, and securing an Interest in him.
 Rather let each of us now be saying, in all the
 Vigour

(n) Rom. vi. 16.

Vigour of Health, *Am I serving Christ? Am I interested in him?* To assist us in a Concern of such infinite Importance, we have

First, Explained the grand Inquiry, what it is for *any Man to be in Christ* : and,

Secondly, Have proved, that *any Man* may know whether he has an Interest in *Christ*, or not, by Arguments drawn from the Manner in which the divine Oracles direct us to attain this Knowledge—the evident Tendency of Scripture-Promises to produce it—the peculiar Concern it has with the Characters and Offices of the Holy Spirit, as a Reprover and Comforter—and the Experience of Multitudes by whom it has been actually attained. We are now,

Thirdly, To point out some of the Reasons, why many Persons never know whether they have an Interest in *Christ* or not.

A very imperfect Acquaintance with the Christian World will enable us to observe, that this is owing to one or other of the following Causes ; either,—gross Ignorance of the Truths of the Gospel ; or,—total Neglect of eternal Concerns ; or,—the cherishing some criminal Passion ; or,—a Recourse to false Evidences ; or,—unwarily prescribing Limits to the Operations of the Spirit of God ; or,—not applying divine Promises ; or,—not coming to the Lord's Table. *These Causes* are each of them of a *Moral Nature*, and therefore are easily to be distinguished from *others*

which are, either *Natural*, or *Supernatural*; such as *Melancholy*, the *Buffetings of Satan*, and *divine Desertions*. Concerning these *last*, it should be carefully observed, that they certainly are the *great Affliction* of those that are exercised with them; but are by no Means to be esteemed their *Guilt*. And even where these *last* are blended with the *former*, as is not unusual, they tend in Proportion to their Degree of Influence, to diminish, rather than aggravate the *Guilt* arising from *Moral Causes*. And consequently, if there be any here, whose Want of satisfactory Evidence of their Interest in Christ is merely owing to a *melancholy Constitution*, or to *Satan's Buffetings*, or to *divine Desertions*, they may assure themselves that the following Particulars are not designed to charge them with the least *Guilt*.

1. There are many in the Christian World, whose Want of knowing whether they have an Interest in *Christ*, or not, may be ascribed to their "gross Ignorance of the Truths of the Gospel".

That Ignorance is the Source of unnumbered and most fatal Mischiefs to the Souls of Men is past Doubt. Therefore the Lord complains, *my People are destroyed for Lack of Knowledge* (o). For the same Reason the Gospel is sent to the Nations, *to open their Eyes, and to turn them from Darknefs*

(o) *Hos.* iv. 6.

Darkness to Light (p). But Nothing can more exalt our Ideas of the Importance of Knowledge, than to hear our blessed Lord pleading with his Father, in Behalf of his Disciples, *this is Life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent* (q). But though Knowledge is so necessary to constitute the Christian's Character, and be his sure Guide in the Way to eternal Life; yet, alas! what Ignorance of the most important Truths of the Gospel is there in the Christian World? There are Multitudes of *Nominal* Christians, that never obtain any distinct Conceptions,—of the Sinfulness of Sin;—the Misery of an unpardoned State;—the Worth of a Saviour;—or, the Nature and Necessity of Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord *Jesus Christ*. Unhappy Souls! They are baptized; but live, and die, without knowing, without inquiring, to what valuable End their Baptism serves! They go through a Circle of religious Services, on which might properly be written, *To the unknown God* (r). They hope all is well with them; but their Hope is centered in themselves, in their own Worthiness, their good Meanings, and Performances, but not in *Christ*; and consequently it is an unscriptural Hope, utterly insufficient to be the *Rest* and *Repose* of an immortal Soul! *The Bed is shorter than that a Man can stretch himself on it, and the Covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it* (s).

C 4

Whilst

(p) *Acts* xxvi. 18.
(r) *Acts* xvii. 23.

(q) *John* xvii. 3.
(s) *Isai.* xxviii. 20.

Whilst they are ignorantly cherishing their false Hope, it astonishes them to be told, that a *Personal Interest in Christ is necessary to Salvation*, and may be certainly known ; and, according to their Custom of *speaking Evil of the Things that they understand not* (t), they are not afraid to pronounce this a Thing impossible. Whilst they flatter themselves, that *they are rich, and increased with Goods, and have Need of Nothing* to render their spiritual State better ; *they know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked* (u). Such is the Christianity of Multitudes ! Awfull State and Condition ! Their Ignorance of the Truths of the Gospel renders them utterly incapable of giving a determinate Answer to the grand Inquiry, *Am I in Christ*, or not ?

2. “ A total Neglect of eternal Concerns”, is another obvious Reason, why Multitudes never know whether they have an Interest in *Christ*, or not.

There is no doubt but gross Ignorance is frequently the Cause of this Negligence. But, alas ! where Knowledge itself abounds, this Neglect of eternal Concerns is too often most lamentably prevalent. Many are the professing Christians, who excell in every natural and acquired Endowment of Mind ; who are blessed with all the Advantages of Genius and Education ; and to whose Conception and Expression the great Truths of the

(t) 2 Pet. ii. 12.

(u) Rev. iii. 17.

the Gospel are plain and easy. But, with all this speculative Knowledge, and distinguished Furniture for religious Dispute, what lamentable Proofs are they daily giving, that Eternal Concerns are the farthest from their serious Thought and Care? How incessantly are they *making Provision for the Flesh, to fulfill the Lusts thereof (w) ? Their God is their Belly, their Glory is in their Shame, they mind earthly Things (x).* These are the many that perpetually say, *who will shew us any Good (y) ? The God of this World hath so blinded their Minds (z),* and hardened their Hearts, that whilst they profess to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent ; yet in Works they deny both the Father and the Son, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good Work reprobate (a). That a Man cannot be profited, if he should gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul (b), is what they approve in Speculation: But view their Practice, and all eternal Things are Trifles with them, whilst the Things of Time and Sense are infinitely important. How can such Christians as these discover their Interest in Christ, when it is impossible they should have it, so long as they continue such ? How much more likely are they, to die with a Lye in their right Hand (c) ? And, when it is too late, have the Veil taken from their Eyes, their Hopes vanish away for ever, and the Saviour, whom they slighted, pronounce their

(w) *Rom. xiii. 14.* (x) *Phil. iii. 19.*

(y) *Psalms iv. 6.* (z) *2 Cor. iv. 4.*

(a) *Titus i. 16.* (b) *Mat. xvi. 26.*

(c) *Isai. xlv. 20.*

their dreadful Doom, *I tell you, I know you not whence ye are, depart from me, all ye Workers of Iniquity (d) ?*

3. Others are prevented from certainly knowing whether they have an Interest in *Christ*, or not, by “cherishing some “criminal Passion”.

Such Christians there are, who are neither greatly *ignorant* of the Truths of the Gospel, nor totally *negligent* of eternal Concerns : They have so much Knowledge and Zeal as render their religious Profession reputable : And, perhaps, they are possessed of some low Degree of real Piety. But, whilst such look with Abhorrence upon all the more open and aggravated Sins of Omission and Commission, they either indulge to anxious *Cares for the Morrow* ; or to inordinate Desires after worldly Enjoyments, and sensual Gratifications ; or they are often falling into the Excess of Anger, and other irregular and disorderly Affections ; or their Devotion is suffered to grow cold and formal, though they cannot forget its stated Returns ; or they are expressing their *Conformity* to a degenerate Age and *World (e)*, beyond the just Limits of a *holy Conversation*, and *circumspect Walking*. It is almost impossible to mention all the Symptoms of a *little Faith (f)* ; or point out every Step by which true Christians

(d) *Luke* xiii. 27. (e) *Rom.* xii. 2.

(f) *Mat.* viii. 26.

tians may *leave their first Love* (g). But, where-
 ever the divine Life is in this feeble languishing
 State, do not wonder if the *Comfort* of it be lost
 with its *Vigour*, and the *Evidences of Grace* be ren-
 dered doubtfull and obscure amidst so many *Blots*,
 and *Blemishes*. *If our Hearts condemn us not, then*
have we Confidence towards God (h). *If therefore*
our Hearts condemn us for cherishing what is ap-
 parently criminal, what hath the Appearance of
 being evil, or what we cannot but suspect to be
 so, *our Confidence towards God* will totter and fail,
 and our Evidence of an Interest in *Christ* will
 be proportionably defective.

4. There are some serious Christians,
 who hinder their own satisfactory View
 of an Interest in *Christ*, by “a Re-
 course to false Evidences”.

It is well known that the Generality of Christ-
 less Sinners, so far as they attempt to form
 any Judgment of their own spiritual State,
 usually have Recourse to false Evidences; and
 therefore *receive in themselves that Recompence of*
their Error which is meet (i). Both the grossly
 ignorant, and the totally negligent, are prone to
 fix their false Hopes of an Interest in *Christ*
 on Evidences that are equally false; such as,—
 their Christian Name;—their Baptism;—their
 partaking of the Lord's Supper;—their spe-
 culative Knowledge, and other spiritual Gifts;
 —their

(g) *Rev.* ii. 4. (h) *1 John* iii. 21.
 (i) *Rom.* i. 27.

—their Zeal for a particular Form of Worship, or Scheme of Doctrine ;—their decent and constant Attendance upon religious Duties ;—their being descended from pious Ancestors ;—their good Education ;—their Freedom from open Immoralities ;—or their having had some transient Convictions of Conscience, with Resolutions for, and some Progress in, the Reformation of their Lives. No serious Christian can be supposed to be in much Danger of deceiving himself by a Recourse to Evidences so manifestly false as these are. If such a one hinders his own satisfactory View of his Interest in *Christ*, by applying to Evidences that may be denominated false, it is natural to suppose, that the Fraud is of a more refined Nature, and of a less dangerous Tendency.

Perhaps serious Christians are suspecting they have no real Interest in *Christ*, “ because they are not perfectly holy”. In this Case they do not duly consider, nor clearly discern, the wide Difference between their *allowing no Sin*, and their being *sinless*. They vainly expect, their Conflicts with Corruptions and Temptations shall cease, before they get to *Heaven*. They forget, that Sanctification *here* is but *in Part*, and not in *Perfection* ; Though more perfect in some, than in others, yet imperfect in all : That it is not a Work to be performed all *at once*, but *gradually* ; and therefore *the Path of the Just* is compared to *the shining Light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect Day* (k). They do not distinguish between

tween *Sanctification*, and *Justification*; that though both *begin* with *Faith* in *Christ*, yet the latter does not admit of different Degrees, like the former : That though Believers are sanctified *gradually* ; yet they are justified *immediately* : That Justification is *compleat* in them all ; at the same Time that they *differ like one Star from another* in (l) the Degrees of their Sanctification. Or, in other Words, they should remember, that being *washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God* (m), they need not doubt the Acceptance of their *sincere*, though *imperfect*, Obedience.

Sometimes serious Christians are ready to conclude they have no Interest in *Christ*, “ because “ their Prayers are not immediately answered”. But did not such a Saint as *David* cry, *how long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever* (n) ? Did not such an Apostle as *Paul* beseech the Lord thrice (o), without obtaining the Removal of his particular Complaint ? Is it not our *Infirmity*, if we expect more than God has promised ? Or, if we doubt of his Goodness and Mercy, his Truth, and Faithfulness, merely because we have not the Answer of our Prayers in a *Way*, or *Time*, that is not good for us ?

Again, the Fears of serious Christians, concerning their Interest in *Christ*, are often excited by observing, that “ their Affections are not at “ all Times equally lively and spiritual”. They
D do

(l) 1 Cor. xv. 41. (m) 1 Cor. vi. 11.

(n) Psalm xiii. 1. (o) 2 Cor. xii. 8.

do not sufficiently consider the great Impropriety and Inconvenience of judging of their spiritual State by the changeable Posture of their Affections. None ever excelled *David* for a devotional Temper, yet we find him complaining, *my Soul cleaveth to the Dust*, and consequently praying, *Lord, quicken thou me according to thy Word* (p). Though the *Affections* are ever so variable, yet if the *Bent and Inclination of the Will* is unalterably fixed, for God and *Christ*, for Heaven and Holiness, there is a sufficient Evidence of an Interest in *Christ*.

And perhaps there is not any one false Evidence of an Interest in *Christ* more frequently made Use of, by serious Persons, to their great Prejudice, than “comparing themselves with others, without considering the great Difference of Circumstances”. Because they fall short of the Piety and Zeal of Prophets, or Apostles; or find themselves very unequal to some eminent Saints, whose Lives they have read; whose Educations, and Spheres of Action were widely different from their own; and of whose Infirmities and Failings, little or Nothing is said, that ought to have been said; therefore they are apt to overlook and undervalue whatever God has done for their own Souls, and even to conclude themselves utterly destitute of a divine Life and Temper. It was to prevent the fatal Influence, which this Reasoning might have upon Christians, when called to pray with, and for, their afflicted Brethren, that the Apostle *James* reminds such of the

the imperfect Character of the Prophet *Elijah*. *Elias*, says he, *was a Man subject to like Passions as we are*, yet his Prayers were crowned with remarkable Success (q). He would therefore have them to infer, that, if they compared the Success of their own Prayers with the greater Success of *Elijah's*, they should also be so just to themselves as to compare their Infirmities with his; that whilst his Prayers discourage them, his Infirmities may give them suitable Relief.

By a Recourse to such false Evidences as these, and many more that might be mentioned, truly pious Souls are often interrupting their own Peace, even to such a Degree, as to render the most plain and obvious, the most rational and Scriptural Solutions utterly ineffectual to restore and confirm it.

5. Other serious Christians darken their Views of an Interest in *Christ*, by
“unwarily prescribing Limits to the
“Operations of the Spirit of God”.

Their incautious and very mistaken Manner of reasoning is to this Effect. “Alas! we have
“no satisfactory Evidence of our Interest in
“*Christ*, for—our serious Impressions did not
“begin soon enough in Life;—we are not able,
“like others, to determine the particular Time,
“Occasions, and Means, of our Conversion;
“—had the Work of true Conversion been ever
D 2 wrought

“ wrought in us, our Sorrow for Sin would have
 “ been deeper;—our Fears of Hell would have
 “ been more alarming;—a Sense of the Wrath
 “ of God would have filled us with greater Hor-
 “ ror and Agony of Spirit;—our Apprehensions
 “ of his Love in *Jesus Christ* would have been
 “ more tender and melting;—our Conflicts with
 “ Corruptions and Temptations would have
 “ been sharper, more various, and of longer Con-
 “ tinuance;—and no Doubt we should have
 “ equalled others in divine Graces and Consola-
 “ tions. It is too apparent, that our Christiani-
 “ ty is only a Name: We have the *Form of God-
 “ linefs*, without *the Power*; and our Disease will
 “ scarcely admit of a Remedy”. Thus the O-
 perations of a divine Spirit, thro’ the malicious
 Suggestions of the Spirit of Darknes, are misre-
 presented and disguised. Alas! instead of a
 Heart enlarged with Thankfulness, in the Con-
 templation of such harmonious and beautiful Va-
 riety, so visible in the gracious Operations of the
 Spirit of God; the deceived Soul is swallowed
 up in Murmuring and Discontent, and torment-
 ed with Anxiety and Despair. How effectually
 would such Operations be vindicated, and the
 Comfort of the sanctified Soul be speedily resto-
 red, if the Apostle’s Reasoning was well attended
 to? *There are Diversities of Gifts, but the same
 Spirit: and there are Diversities of Operations, but
 it is the same GOD, which worketh all in all*
 (r). It is the same divine Agent, which adapts
 his

his Manner of Operation to the Difference of natural Tempers, Educations, and a Variety of other Circumstances belonging to different Persons. To awaken some notorious Sinners, he seems to ride in the Whirlwind. To impress others, of a different Character, *he comes softly, and with a still Voice*. One is brought to *Christ* in the Anguish of overwhelming Sorrows. Another is *overcome with Love*, and therefore soon bursts forth into Songs of Joy and Gratitude. Souls, recovered from gross Ignorance, and a long Course of open Prophaneness and Impiety, may determine the Place, the Time, and the Manner of their Conversion: While those, of a better Education, and a more regular Conduct, are perhaps led to *Christ*, they know not how, only upon calm Reflection they can say, *whereas we were once blind, now we see*. But,

6. It is to be feared the Perplexity of most serious *Christians*, concerning their Interest in *Christ*, is chiefly owing to
“ their not making a more particular
“ Application of divine Promises”.

The Promises are Heaven's kind, unchangeable Engagements to communicate Happiness to truly penitent and believing Sinners. They are indited by *the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter (s)*, who is therefore styled *the holy Spirit of Promise (t)*. They are confirmed by the Oath of God,
D 3 that

(s) *John* xv. 26.

(t) *Ephes.* i. 13.

that by two such immutable Things, his Promise and his Oath, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong Consolation (u). They are sealed with the Blood of Christ (w), have such an immediate Reference to him, and are so compleatly accomplished in him, that therefore all the Promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen (x). They are the Foundation of our Faith and Hope, and the Charter of our spiritual Priviledges. They are Bills drawn upon the Bank of Heaven, which God, by all the Perfections of his Nature, and all the Engagements of his Covenant, is obliged to honour. They are a Treasure, exceeding great and precious (y), beyond all Estimation.

We may properly be said to apply divine Promises to ourselves, when we value them as our best Treasure; when we venture our all upon them; when we are anxious to know our personal Interest in them; when we give them the best Place in our Meditations; and when we often plead them in Prayer, especially under all our Burthens of conscious Guilt and Pollution, and in Seasons of Affliction and Temptation. This is the Way to honour God, whose Promises they are, and the Redeemer, by whose Blood they are sealed; and consequently it is the most effectual Way to secure Peace to our own Souls. Why else doth the Prophet say, *Thou wilt keep him in perfect Peace, whose Mind is stayed on thee; because*

(u) Heb. vi. 17, 18.

(x) 2 Cor. i. 20.

(w) Luke xxii. 20

(y) 2 Pet. i. 4.

because he trusteth in Thee (z)? Was not this the Way in which Abraham's Faith discovered both its excellent Nature and happy Tendency? He staggered not at the Promise of God through Unbelief; but was strong in Faith, giving Glory to God (a).

There are indeed many humble pious Souls, who are very unjustly condemning themselves, for their neglect of divine Promises, and their Want of Faith in them. But the real Cause of their Complaint seems to be, not their Want of due Regard to divine Promises, but their unhappily mistaking the Nature of Faith, and supposing there can be no true *Faith* without *Assurance*. To believe in *Christ* for Salvation, is, "such a Persuasion that he is the Saviour of Sinners, and such a Desire and Expectation of the Blessings which he has in his Gospel promised to his People, as engages the Soul to fix its Dependence upon him, and subject itself to him in all the Ways of holy Obedience". And certainly there are many who thus believe, tho' they are not fully persuaded of their personal Interest in *Christ*. Many have the *Truth of Grace*, tho' for a Time they want the *Comfort of it*. Such are apt to be full of Fears about their own Sincerity, and rashly conclude, they have no Faith, only because they cannot believe themselves to be sincere. They should consider, that to doubt of their own Sincerity, is not *Unbelief*: It is rather the *Godly Fear* to which the Apostle exhorts.

(z) *Isai.* xxvi. 3.

(a) *Rom.* iv. 20.

exhorts. *Work out your own Salvation*, says he, *with Fear and Trembling* (b). And likewise, *fear, lest a Promise being left us of entering into his Rest, any of you should seem to come short of it* (c). So that while humble pious Souls only doubt their own Sincerity, they are not distrusting God, or *Christ*, but themselves; and it cannot be their Sin to distrust themselves. While they only doubt, whether they have the Qualifications and Characteristicks to which the Promises are made, they are not therefore neglecting the Promises, but are really applying them. Amidst all their Self-Condemnations, I would ask them; do not you value the Promises as your Treasure? Is not your Dependance upon them, more than upon an Arm of Flesh? Would not you give all the World to know your personal Interest in them? Is not one Promise, or another, continually in your Thoughts? And are not your Prayers full of earnest Pleadings, that divine Promises may be accomplished in your own present and future Blessedness? Be convinced, then, that it is a great and dangerous Mistake to make *Faith* to consist in *Assurance*; or to conclude, that you are neglecting divine Promises, when you are only doubting your own personal Interest in them. This Mistake of yours might have been mentioned under the Head of “having Recourse to false Evidences”; But it is never unseasonable to administer Comfort to pious Mour-
ners,

(b) *Phil.* ii. 12.(c) *Heb.* iv. 1.

ners, and the Case is so common as to deserve this particular Notice.

On the Contrary, there are too many *Christians*, who greatly sin, by neglecting divine Promises, and not applying them as they ought. They are more prone to distrust God and *Christ*, than themselves. They lose their Sense of the Preciousness of the Promises, and are valuing some Thing else as their Treasure. They are honouring, with their Confidence, the Word of mortal Man, more than the Word of the living God. They are slothful and negligent about their Interest in *Christ*, but zealous in securing the Interests of Time and Sense. Divine Promises are, to them, like Things forgotten, and out of Mind. And to plead them earnestly, is too little consistent with the cold and formal Temper of their Prayers. No wonder the Faith of such is *little* and *staggering*, ever prone to call in Question the Truth and Faithfulness of God, and the Power and Grace of *Christ*. They affront God and *Christ*, by making light of divine Promises; and the Indignity is justly resented, and plainly punished, by his *sending Leanness into their Souls* (d). We are once more to observe,

7. There are a few real Christians, who continue in painful Doubt concerning their Interest in *Christ* “for want of “coming to his Table”.

The

The holy Ordinance of the Lord's Supper, is too often abused and profaned by promiscuous Admissions, and too often prostituted to Purposes, that have not the least Connection with the Improvement of a divine Life and Temper. Whilst *unworthy* Communicants are too numerous, there are a few serious Christians, who are kept at a Distance from the sacred Feast, only by their own mistaken Apprehensions of their great *Unfitness* for it. Happy would it be, if the Consciences of the *former* were deeply convinced of the Guilt they are contracting, and their Minds were well instructed how to escape the Condemnation to which they are exposed! And happy for the *latter*, if their Fears of eating and drinking sacramental Bread and Wine *unworthily*, were accompanied with the equally rational Fears of disobeying their Lord's positive Command! To come with *Fears of Unworthiness*, is the Posture of humble, and consequently of *worthy Communicants*. But by such *Fears* to be driven from the Discharge of an important Duty, is *really* committing Sin, to avoid the *Appearance* of Sin.

Ye *fearful* Christians! Are you anxious to discern your Interest in *Christ*? Make Haste to obey his Command. He has expressly commanded, *do this in Remembrance of Me*. Hope not to obtain Comfort out of the Way of Obedience. First obey *Christ*, and then see, if such a Master can long neglect those that are supremely concerned to please him. Certainly this is a more direct and justifiable Expedient, for scattering
your

your Fears concerning your Interest in *Christ*, than to resolve, you will stay away from the Lord's Table, till you can first clearly discern your Interest in him. Solid Peace is only to be found in the Way of Obedience.

The Request of a dying Friend has always been thought sacred. Such was our Lord's Appointment concerning his Supper. It was delivered to his Disciples, with such immediate and solemn Reference to his Death, *the same Night in which he was betrayed* (e), that it may most properly be called his dying Request.—See what peculiar Notice the blessed God took of a certain Family amongst the *Jews*, and what a special Blessing he pronounced upon their Posterity, only because they had long and punctually performed the Request of a dying Father. The Case was this, *Jonadab the Son of Rechab charged his Sons to drink no Wine all their Days, they, their Wives, their Sons, nor their Daughters ; nor to build Houses for them to dwell in ; neither to have Vineyards, nor Fields, nor Seed.* And because the Sons of this *Jonadab* absolutely refused to drink Wine, which the Prophet *Jeremiah*, at the Commandment of the Lord, set before them, to try them ; therefore, in the midst of the desolating Judgments then denounced against Judah, and all the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, *the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel says, Jonadab the Son of Rechab shall not want a Man to stand before Me for ever* (f).—No longer let the Disciples of
Jesus

(e) 1 Cor. xi. 23.

(f) *Jeremiah xxxv.*

Jesus live in Disobedience to his dying Command. Let even their pious Fears determine them to wait upon him in his appointed Way ; till they receive his Blessing, and rejoice in his Love. — It now remains to conclude with some Considerations, more immediately designed,

Fourthly, To urge all those to make the grand Inquiry, *am I in Christ* or not, who have hitherto neglected it.

“ Blessed Saviour ! Teach Men to ask after Thee. Fix their Attention to eternal Things.
 “ Excite in them earnest Inquiries after their own Salvation. Lord, help them to consider.
 “ And, *with thy Finger*, write upon their Hearts such Considerations as these” ;— *Am I in Christ*, is the most necessary Inquiry we can possibly make ;—it is of universal Concern ;—there is no Inquiry in the World of so advantageous a Nature ;—there is Nothing which Men are more tempted by their worst Enemies to neglect ;—or more earnestly intreated by their best Friends to regard.

I. Consider *the absolute Necessity* of your inquiring after an Interest in *Christ*,

You know the World is full of Inquiries. Every Man flatters himself that his own, whatever that be, is the most necessary. Indeed, such are the mistaken Apprehensions which Men are forming of the Objects around them, that every perishing Enjoyment of Time and Sense is pursued,

pursued, as if it were absolutely necessary to true Happiness. Thousands are raising their Thoughts and Wishes no higher than prosperous Trades, large Estates, well-furnished Tables, elegant Dress, numerous Attendants, or the Breath of popular Applause. Others are more reasonably panting after the Joys of Friendship, or the valuable Improvements of Arts and Sciences. But what are any, or all of these, compared with the Care of the Soul, the *one Thing needfull* (g)? I may be rich, or great, admired for my Stores of Learning, or confided in as the Soul of Friendship; but, without an Interest in *Christ*, my Damnation is certain and unavoidable. *For what is a Man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul* (b)? How are Mortals imposing a Cheat upon themselves which is big with infinite Mischief? Fancying this or that Inquiry the most necessary, till the Flames of Hell convince them of their fatal Delusion?

Men and Brethren, for God's Sake, open your Eyes, and see written, as with the Sun-Beams, that *all Things are Vanity, and Vexation of Spirit* abstracted from an Interest in *Christ*. And what have you to plead for neglecting that, which is most necessary? Is a Moment's Delay, when all is at Stake, to be vindicated at the Bar of Reason? Will you continue to delay, for successive Months, or Years, as if *Necessity* itself had lost all its Power of Sollicitation? Dare you
E hope

hope to succeed at last, like the *penitent Thief*? Your Hope is vain: For *He*, without any Delay, sought an Interest in *Christ*, as soon as he came to the Knowledge of him. *O that Men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter End (i)!*

2. Consider, that the grand Inquiry, *am I in Christ*, or not, is of universal Concern.

The Apostle seems solicitous to have this Consideration taken special Notice of, when he says in the Text, *if any Man be in Christ*. An Interest in *Christ* is equally necessary for every Man. Every Man has a precious immortal Soul, that must be saved, or damned for ever. But *there is no other Name under Heaven given among Men*, besides that of Jesus Christ, *whereby we must be saved (k)*. Therefore to secure an Interest in him, is equally the Concern of *learned and unlearned, of rich and poor, of Princes and Beggars, of Preachers and Hearers, of old and young, of sick and well, of the living and dying. It is appointed unto Men, of every Language, Rank, and Character, once to die, but after this the Judgment (l)*. If any individual Person, in the whole human Race, can be exempted from Death and Judgment, then only may he be excused from the grand Inquiry, *am I in Christ*, or not?

3. Consider

(i) *Deut.* xxxii. 29. (k) *Acts* iv. 12.

(l) *Heb.* ix. 27.

3. Consider, that there is no Inquiry in the World of so *Advantageous a Nature* as this, *am I in Christ*, or not ?

Godliness is profitable unto all Things, having Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come (m). To seek an Interest in *Christ*, is the very first Step towards Godliness, and consequently an Introduction to the greatest Profit attainable by a rational Being. Ask the experienced Travellers in the Ways of Godliness, what Advantage they have found ? They will all of them assure you, that *her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace (n).* They will love to recount their various and invaluable Blessings; such as, the Pardon of their Sins, the Favour and Friendship of God, a new and divine Nature, Peace of Conscience, Joy in the Holy Ghost, together with their *lively Hopes* of eternal Glory. To all their wondrous Tale they will add, that *the half is not told you*; and will easily demonstrate to you, that the least Blessing of Godliness is infinitely better than all the Profits and Pleasures of Sin.

But don't imagine, Sirs, that because such Blessings are invaluable, therefore they are difficult to obtain. Never conclude them beyond your Reach, if you do but seek them *while it is called, to-Day*. Therefore, *ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall*

E 2

(m) 1 Tim. iv. 8. (n) Prov. iii. 17.

shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened (o). Can your Hearts desire to make a profitable Return, on Terms more easy and reasonable? And is it not the greatest Infatuation, to look upon such inconceivable Gain with Indifference? But,

4. Consider, that there is nothing you are more tempted by your worst Enemies to neglect, than the grand Inquiry, *am I in Christ*, or not?

It cannot be difficult to determine who are your worst Enemies. Does it not shew the most inveterate and deadly Enmity to your highest Interest and Happiness, to be continually practising all imaginable Arts, for blinding your Reason, stupifying your Consciences, debasing your immortal Natures, and subjecting them to Passion and Appetite, in Order that your Souls may be absolutely enslaved, nor have any Leisure or Inclination to exert so much as a Thought towards rescuing themselves from the complicated Chains?

Such, Sinners, are the unwearied Efforts of an Enemy you are cherishing in your own Bosoms, even your corrupt and inordinate *Self-Love*. Is not this inbred Traytor perpetually suggesting to you such Things as these?

“ There is no Need to be over-thoughtfull
“ about

“ about an Interest in *Christ*. He will save you
“ without so much ado. Now is your Time
“ for Business and Pleasure. You have a Thou-
“ sand Things to mind at present. An Interest
“ in *Christ* may be thought of, and inquired af-
“ ter, at any Time. It will be Pity to lose your
“ agreeable Companions, your innocent Mirth,
“ and indeed the very best Season you will
“ ever have for Self-Enjoyment. When you
“ will, you may return to the dull Work of
“ your Closets. There is a more convenient
“ Time to serve *Christ*: Whereas to mind your
“ Souls now, will make you melancholly too
“ soon”. Who but an *Enemy* will sow such Tares
as these (p)? What else, but an *Evil Heart of*
Unbelief, will thus contrive how to depart, at
the remotest Distance, from the living God (q)?
Believe it, Sinners, every Man is tempted, when
he is drawn away of his own Lust, and enticed (r).

And is not *Satan*, that restless implacable
Enemy to Souls, as a roaring Lion, walking
about, seeking whom he may devour (s)? Are not
Multitudes of Souls taken Captive by him at his
Will (t)?

When has the *World* ever approved itself a
Friend to Men's eternal Interests? What Forms
of Temptation does it not wear? There is the
Lust of the Flesh, the *Lust of the Eyes*, and the
Pride of Life (u); all of them in closest Union,

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labouring

(p) *Matt.* xiii. 25. (q) *Heb.* iii. 12.

(r) *James* i. 14. (s) *1 Peter* v. 8.

(t) *2 Tim.* ii. 26. (u) *1 John* ii. 16.

labouring incessantly to extinguish every serious Thought of *Christ* and Salvation, and without the least Compassion pushing Thousands of immortal Souls into eternal Ruin.

Sinners, pity yourselves. Learn Self-Preservation from the Number, Strength, and Policy of your Enemies. Were your Eyes open to see your Danger; what horrid Cruelty your Enemies are concealing under a specious Vail of Friendship; and how united, and enraged, they are, against the Name and Interest of *Jesus*; you would never give Sleep to your Eyes, nor Slumber to your Eye-Lids, till, in Defiance of the *World*, the *Flesh*, and the *Devil*, your whole Heart was filled with anxious Inquiries after an Interest in *Christ*.

5. Be intreated once more to consider, that there is Nothing you are more earnestly solicited by your best Friends to regard, than the grand Inquiry, *Am I in Christ* or not?

You cannot doubt the friendly Intentions of the *Blessed God*, in the Bounties of his Providence, in the Gift of his Son, in the Promise of his Spirit, and the kind Invitations and Encouragements of his Word. You are persuaded, that your faithful Ministers, your pious Relatives, and many other Godly Persons, are seeking your best Interest; and would not, knowingly, contribute to your eternal Misery, no, not for Ten Thousand Worlds. The Friendship of your own

own *Consciences* you never called in Question. And are not *all these* to be numbered amongst your *best Friends*? Would not your Indignation rise against any that but suspected your Interest in such Friendship?

And pray, Sinners, what would these *best Friends* have you to do? Is it not their earnest and sincere, their unanimous and repeated Request, that you would seriously inquire after an Interest in *Christ*? Tho' you have often turned a *deaf Ear* to all their Sollicitations, have they therefore *ceased*? When they have found your *Hearts hardened*, and your *Wills bent* upon your own *Destruction*, did they *then leave you to perish*? Can you calmly sit down, and recollect the Months and Years, through which *these Friends* have been following you with their Kindness, and trying every tender and faithfull Method to engage you to love your own Souls?—Can you do this—and not condemn yourselves for the highest Ingratitude to the *best of Friends*; as well as for the most stupid Neglect of your own Interest? Are not you the very Persons, whom the *Father of Mercies* desires to number with his Children, and embrace as his Favourites?—For whom a Redeemer has shed his Blood, and is now pleading *at the right Hand of the Majesty on high*?—And, with whom, the *holy Spirit* is striving from Day to Day? What affectionate Calls, what melting Expostulations, has the *Gospel* been addressing to your Ears, and trying to fix on your Hearts? Has not *Conscience* sometimes given you inward Pain, and taught
you

you how *faithfull are the Wounds of a Friend* (w)? When at any Time the Joys of Sense have failed, and you have been *holden in Cords of Affliction*, could you avoid concluding, that the *Providence* was designed to teach you a most important Lesson? Could you doubt the Meaning of your *pious Relatives*, when they have often admonished you, and even wept over you?—Now, let these *best Friends* prevail. Act the reasonable Part, and concur with *them* in desiring your own Happiness. Think—how much *Heaven* itself will consist in having these *Friends eternally pleased with you*. Think—if *Hell* itself can have any Thing more tormenting than the *total Loss of such Friendship*. For God's Sake, set your *best Friends* over against your *worst Enemies*; compare the different Spirit, with which they are animated; and the quite different Ends, to which their Endeavours with you are directed: And then *resolve*, and make the *Resolution*, with the greatest Sincerity, and most entire Dependance on divine Grace; “Henceforward, our *worst Enemies* shall be disappointed; our *best Friends* shall be served and pleased; our *own eternal Salvation* shall be secured; and therefore the grand Question, *am I in Christ*, or not, shall, without farther Delay, be seriously asked; nor will we rest in any Thing short of a satisfactory Answer”.

But this Address cannot be properly concluded, without taking some Notice of those, whom
Charity

Charity obliges us to place in the Rank of sincere Christians, who have nevertheless been neglecting the grand Inquiry, though not totally, yet in such a Degree as greatly to enfeeble their Graces, and diminish their divine Comforts. Dear Fellow-Christians! Is it not a most desirable Thing, to have the Spirit of God *open the Eyes of your Understanding, that ye may more distinctly know what is the Hope of his Calling, and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints (x)?* Is it not your indispensable Duty, and highest Interest, to grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ(y)? And how can such important Attainments be reasonably expected without the *diligent Use of all appointed Means?* Therefore, suffer the Word of Exhortation, and give Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure (z). Pant after clearer Evidences of your Interest in Christ. See Eternity at the Door. Think, how soon the Judge will appear, to try, and determine your State for ever. Judge yourselves now, that you may not then be condemned with the World (a). You have need of great Searchings of Heart, lest your want of discerning your Interest in Christ should be owing to one, or other, of the Errors just now pointed at: Either, to your remaining Ignorance of the Truths of the Gospel; or, to your lamentable Neglect of eternal Things; or, to your cherishing some criminal Passion; or, your making

(x) *Ephes. i. 18.* (y) *2 Pet. iii. 18.*

(z) *2 Pet. i. 10.* (a) *1 Cor. xi. 32.*

making Use of false Evidences; or, unjustly limiting the Operations of the Spirit; or, not applying divine Promises; or, your not coming to the Table of the Lord; or (may it not be added?) to your careless Attendance at that Holy Table, and Forgetfulness of the Engagements so solemnly made there. *Examine your selves, try, and prove your own selves.* Fervently pray for divine Assistance. Intreat the Lord, *not to take his holy Spirit from you (b).* Beg that the Spirit of Truth may take of the Things of Christ, and shew them unto you (c). Join your selves to lively and experienced Christians, and desire their Prayers and Counsels. Ask them, how their Evidences of an Interest in Christ were first discovered, and how the Clearness of them has since been maintained and increased. See, with peculiar Attention, how much they value, and how afraid they are to lose their divine Comforts; and therefore with what Constancy they watch and pray lest they enter into Temptation (d); and how solicitous they are to walk circumspectly, not as Fools, but as Wise, redeeming the Time, because the Days are evil (e). If one of those holy and happy Souls may speak for the rest, this Advice cannot conclude in better Words than Mr. Flavel's; "I verily believe, (says that excellent Man) that the sweetest Hours Christians enjoy in this World are, when they retire into their Closets, and sit there concealed from all Eyes, but
" him

(b) *Psalms* li. 11. (c) *John* xvi. 15.(d) *Mat.* xxvi. 41. (e) *Ephes.* v. 15, 16.

“ him that made them ; looking, now, into the
“ Bible ; then, into their own Hearts ; and then,
“ up to God ; closely following the grand De-
“ bate about their Interest in *Christ*, till they
“ have brought it to the happy desired Issue † ”.

† Mr. Flavel's *Cure of Mental Errors*. 2d Appen-
dix, page 407, 408.

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